



Louis H. Bruni  
County Judge

1000 Houston St. 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Laredo, Texas 78040

(956) 523-4600  
Fax (956) 523-5065

---

## WEBB COUNTY PRESS RELEASE

---

Monday, July 28, 2003

CONTACT: Raul Casso  
(956) 523-4600

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **JUDGE BRUNI NIXES BRIDGE PROJECT; MAINTAINS COUNTY CANNOT AFFORD IT**

Laredo – During today's meeting of the Webb County Commissioners Court, Webb County Judge Louis H. Bruni announced that the County could not continue pursuing participation in the Fifth International Bridge due to the high expenses that doing so would require, and due to the improbability of obtaining a presidential permit, all expenses and efforts towards that notwithstanding.

"I have always been sensitive to Webb County's economic plight, and the need to improve our condition with additional sources of revenue. However, in order to enjoy the benefits that our participation in the Fifth Bridge might bring, we first have to pay and the question is whether we can afford the cost. Our advisors have now made it clear to us that in order to take the bridge to the next level, we would have to spend between 3 and 5 million dollars, and this in addition to the 2.2 million dollars that was spent by the last administration in pursuit of the Fifth Bridge."

Bruni said that his decision to pursue the Fifth Bridge was prompted on the one hand by his appreciation of Webb County's need to develop alternate sources of revenues, and, on the other hand, by the need to protect the County's 2.2 million dollar investment made by the prior administration.

Bruni pointed out that only now, after having gone through his first budget hearings for the County, is he in a position to determine what the County's finances really are.

"All the Webb County's credit is good, and remains good, there are limits to our credit before we effect the tax rate. If we over extend ourselves and our options become critical, then the threat of raising taxes increases. Raising taxes is something I will not do."

Bruni noted that in addition to the considerable expenditures that would be required of Webb County in order to continue its pursuit of the presidential permit, the obtaining the permit was in no way guaranteed, but was in fact not a good prospect given the on going competition between the County and the City for the Fifth Bridge.

"The City currently has a competing permit application on file with TXDOT, and we have been advised that as long as there are competing applications there will be no presidential permit. A presidential permit will never issue so long as there are two applications on file."

Bruni noted that discussions with the City have not proved fruitful and continue with regards to any partnership between the City and the County and the Fifth Bridge.

"It does not appear to me at this point that we will ever enter into an agreement with the City to have a partnership with regards to the Fifth Bridge, although, we may recoup the expenditures made by the last administration. Keep in mind that if the community needs a bridge, then either the City or the County, or both, are standing in the way of progress. We have to consider how far we will allow this to go on," stated Bruni.

Bruni maintained that in view of the enormous expense that would be required by Webb County in order to continue pursuit of a Fifth Bridge, and in view of the uncertainty of obtaining any permit that he could not in good conscience continue to support the project as being in the best interest of the community,

"I want to emphasize that when I was elected by the community, it was to take care of the community's best interests, to spend its money wisely, and to commit the County only to projects and to cover governmental matters that would serve it and serve it well. Unfortunately, the bridge did not qualify under those standards regardless of how much we wanted a bridge so

as to improve our economic condition. I regret that it has come to this but that is how life is – we just can't afford it."

###